



## **American Corn Growers Association**

P.O. Box 18157 • Washington, DC 20036 • 202-835-0330 • Fax: 202-463-0862

April 9, 2003

The Honorable Michael Powell  
Federal Communications Commission  
445 12th Street, SW  
Washington, DC 20554

Dear Chairman Powell:

I understand the Federal Communications Commission is currently conducting a second review of the transition to digital television (MB Docket No. 03-15). As part of this review, I urge you to consider the interests of rural Americans.

There is, undeniably, a digital divide that separates rural America from much of the country. Rural America often lags behind our suburban and urban neighbors in gaining access to new technology. While the rollout of DTV has been steady, we are very concerned that the progress is seriously lacking in rural communities. One clear reason for this is the fact that many broadcasters appear unwilling or unable to broadcast signals at a sufficient strength.

At present, there are 1,304 broadcast stations in the U.S. Of those, 754 are on the air with digital signals. However, 422 of those stations nationwide are operating at low power. That means that only one quarter of the nation's broadcasters are broadcasting digital signals at full power!

As you know, weak signals have a more difficult time traveling longer distances and reaching rural homes. This means diminished reception capabilities for rural families.

Chairman Powell, you yourself have stated that digital television is an important new technology that offers the American public exciting new ways to obtain information. It seems patently unfair that rural Americans should be placed at an immediate disadvantage in obtaining access to this new technology.

That is why I urge you to take action. Broadcasters should be compelled to broadcast their signals at full strength. Rural Americans should not be disenfranchised here in the early stages of the digital transition.

I appreciate your time and attention to this matter. If I can be of any assistance further explaining the concerns of rural Americans, please do not hesitate to let me know.

Sincerely,

Larry Mitchell  
Chief Executive Officer